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ABSTRACT

The efficacy of using the BIOSIS Previews database as an online information retrieval tool in clinical psychology was investigated in a study conducted at the University of West Florida. Recognizing the importance of multi-database searching strategies when seeking comprehensive results, this study compared the citation output of this underutilized database to that of PsycINFO for five practical examples of interest to clinical psychologists: (1) hypertension; (2) the Beck Depression Inventory; (3) headache and depression; (4) homicide and gunshot/bullet; and (5) MMPI and law/legal/forensic. For four of the five search examples the number of citations retrieved indicated a superior performance for BIOSIS Previews. In the fifth search, six citations in BIOSIS Previews and 10 citations in PsycINFO yielded 15 unique citations as there was only one overlap. These results attest to the usefulness of accessing BIOSIS as an adjunct retrieval strategy when searching the professional literature in the behavioral sciences. A table displays the results of the five searches for both databases and four references are listed. (CGD)

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ACCESSING THE BIOSIS PREVIEWS DATABASE IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Summary. - This study investigated the efficacy of using the database BIOSIS PREVIEWS as an online retrieval tool in clinical psychology. Considering the vast information store (5.3 million records) of this underutilized database, the authors demonstrated the productivity of BIOSIS versus PsycINFO citation output. Several illustrated examples were offered, and the implications of the results attest to the usefulness of accessing BIOSIS as an adjunct retrieval strategy when searching the professional literature.

ACCESSING THE BIOSIS PREVIEWS DATABASE IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Researchers in the behavioral sciences frequently turn to PsycINFO and/or PsycALERT when engaged in computerized literature retrieval. Use of these databases seems to be a reasonable approach in accessing relevant research since PsycINFO scans nearly 1,500 journals and serial publications in the disciplines of psychology, psychiatry, neurology, education, and sociology from 1967 to date. However, Recent literature on database retrieval strategies caution that performing online searches in a single database may limit citation retrieval, particularly when seeking comprehensive results (Piotrowski and Perdue, 1986).

The importance of multi-database searching strategies is recognized by the major database vendors (e.g., DIALOG, and BRS). The DIALOG service for example, offers DIALINDEX - a database that offers numerous "catagories" of databases in a designated field. Behavioral scientists often access the "PSYCH" DIALINDEX category in order to identify productive databases available in the DIALOG system. The "PSYCH" category allows search results to be identified in ERIC, SOCIAL SCISEARCH, PsycINFO, SOCIOLOGICAL ABSTRACTS, CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT, MENTAL HEALTH ABSTRACTS, PsycALERT, and FAMILY RESOURCES .

While multi-database search strategies are highly effective (Brand, 1979; Piotrowski and Perdue, in press) it is ironic that one of the potentially useful databases for behavioral research

is still overlooked by the researcher seeking comprehensive coverage of a search topic in clinical psychology. BIOSIS PREVIEWS is an intriguing bibliographic source since it scans over 9,200 source journals (as well as over 1,000 books, monographs, and theses) each year in biology as well as medicine, neurology, psychiatry, and psychology. With over 5.3 million records (PsycINFO has 560,000 records) already in the database, and with an annual incremental growth of 500,000 records it exceeds MEDLINE in both total size and annual growth. Obviously, a database of this size and scope could serve as an excellent literature retrieval tool for clinical psychologists since this field has now diversified into the disciplines of neurology, neuropsychology, forensics, and behavioral medicine (Perdue, in press).

In order to ascertain the efficacy of accessing BIOSIS PREVIEWS several practical examples of interest to clinical psychologists were selected in both BIOSIS and PsycINFO. Table 1 presents the descriptors and corresponding citation output of each search. Citations (hits) retrieved indicated a superior performance of the BIOSIS database for four of the five search examples in this illustration. The search using **MMPI** and **LEGAL/LAW/FORENSIC** produced six citations in BIOSIS and 10 citations in PsycINFO. However, there was only one reference overlap in this example; thus, by utilizing

both PsycINFO and BIOSIS for this search 15 unique citations would be retrieved. Of course, retrieval results will undoubtedly vary as a function of terms selected.

The current exercise demonstrates the utility of using BIOSIS as either an individual source or in combination with other databases in the behavioral sciences. Clinical researchers and practitioners should consider BIOSIS as an adjunct bibliographic source in multi-database search strategies so as to enhance literature retrieval.

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TABLE 1

Frequency of citations in BIOSIS versus PsycINFO

Search Terms

	BIOSIS	PsycINFO
Hypertension (1981-88)	25,782	890
Beck Depression Inventory (1981-88)	254	96
Headache and Depression (1981-88)	49	20
Homicide and Gunshot/Bullet (1981-88)	3	1
MMPI & Law/Legal/Forensic (1967-88)	6	10